

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02

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USIA-06 SAJ-01 IO-10 /068 W

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R 141849Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7249

INFO AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMCONSUL BELFAST

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, PDEV, UK (NI)

SUBJECT: NORTHERN/IRELAND: REES TAKES MAIN CHANCE

REF: LONDON 279

1. IN DRAMATIC STATEMENT TO COMMONS, NI SECRETARY REES SOUGHT CEASE FIRE BREAKTHROUGH BY MAKING FIRM AND UN-EQUIVOCAL COMMITMENT TO REDUCE BRITISH TROOPS TO NORMAL PEACE-TIME LEVELS, AND TO END DETENTION AND RELEASE ALL DETAINEES IN RETURN FOR "SINCERE AND PERMANENT CESSATION OF VIOLENCE." REES, HOWEVER, POINTED OUT THAT TROOP REDUCTIONS AND FREEING OF DETAINEES WOULD BE PHASED AND CONTINGENT ON HIS BEING CONVINCED THAT CEASE FIRE WAS SINCERE AND DURABLE, NOT JUST A TEMPORARY TACTICAL MANEUVER BY PROVISIONAL IRA (IRAP).

2. REES EXPLICITLY ASSURED PROTESTANT COMMUNITY THAT NEITHER PRESENT NOR PREVIOUS GOVERNMENTS HAD SOUGHT TO "SELL PROTESTANT COMMUNITY DOWN THE RIVER" IN NI AND RE-AFFIRMED THAT HE WOULD NOT UNDERTAKE DIRECT NEGOTIATIONS WITH IRAP. HE DID NOTE, HOWEVER, THAT OFFICIAL IRA AND SINN FEIN HAD BEEN "DEPROSCRIBED" AND WERE FREE TO

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PARTICIPATE OPENLY IN NI POLITICAL PROCESSES.

3. PARLIAMENTARY RESPONSE TO REES INITIATIVE WAS OVERWHELMINGLY FAVORABLE. CONSERVATIVE LEADER HEATH LAUDED HIS HANDLING OF CURRENT CEASE FIRE AND HIS NEW INITIATIVE, AS DID OTHER MPS ON BOTH SIDES OF AISLE. JAMES MOLYNEAUX, LEADER OF UUUC COALITION (REV. PAISLEY WAS CONSPICUOUSLY ABSENT FROM CHAMBER DURING REES' STATEMENT) ALSO COMMENDED REES FOR HIS EFFORTS AND ENDORSED HIS STATEMENT TO HOUSE. ONLY EXCEPTION TO THIS FAVORABLE RESPONSE WAS GERRY FITT, SDLP, WHO AT FIRST APPEARED NOT TO RECOGNIZE FACT THAT HMG IS SEEKING TO LIFT CEASE FIRE BARGAINING TO NEW LEVEL BY THIS GLOBAL APPROACH AND CRITICIZED REES FOR NOT ORDERING IMMEDIATE RELEASE OF SOME DETAINEES. LABOR MEMBER KEVIN MCNAMARA, A FREQUENT CRITIC OF GOVERNMENT NI POLICY, CHIDED FITT FOR HIS FAILURE TO APPRECIATE SCOPE OF REES' STATEMENT.

4. COMMENT: HMG DECISION TO SEEK PERMANENT CESSATION OF VIOLENCE IN NI WITH SINGLE JUMP RATHER THAN CONTINUE PIECE-MEAL EXTENSIONS OF CEASE FIRE REPRESENTS FAR-REACHING CHANGE IN STRATEGY WHICH WAS EVIDENT AS RECENTLY AS LAST WEEK (REFTEL). WE HAVE NOT HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS RATIONALE BEHIND THIS DECISION WITH NI OFFICE, BUT ASSUME IT MUST, INTER ALIA, RESULT FROM HARDENING OF NI OPINION AGAINST RETURN TO VIOLENCE AND IMPROVED INTELLIGENCE AS TO IRAP ATTITUDES AND OBJECTIVES. OTHERWISE IT WOULD APPEAR TO BE A VERY HIGH RISK INITIATIVE WHICH, IF REJECTED, WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY LEAD TO RESUMPTION OF VIOLENCE. WE CANNOT, OF COURSE, PREDICT HOW IRAP WILL RESPOND, BUT THE BALL IS CLEARLY IN ITS COURT.

SPIERS

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